

EXEGESIS OF EXODUS 3:13-22

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Survey

Exodus 3:13-22

13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.' "

15 God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

16 Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt.

17 I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'

18 They will listen to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.'

19 I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.

20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go.

21 I will bring this people into such favor with the Egyptians that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed;

22 each woman shall ask her neighbor and any woman living in the neighbor's house for jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; and so you shall plunder the Egyptians (NRSV).

Moses' historical account of his discourse with the ancient God takes place during a time when much was to be desired for the relief of oppression of the Hebrew people.

The profound conversation found in Exodus 3:13-22 takes place in the desert land of Midian and more precisely on Horeb, the mountain of God.¹ The pericope selected

¹ F.F. Bruce, ed, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), s.v. "Horeb, Mount".

describes the God of Israel's merciful response to the audaciousness of an insignificant shepherd, who is commanded to approach the splendor and pomp of the Pharaoh (Exodus 3:10). The word "pharaoh" actually means "the great house".² Perhaps the inferiority that is portrayed by Moses in Exodus 3:13 is less the result of a skeptical Hebrew nation, and more of an overwhelming response of the splendor of the royal Pharaoh (Exodus 3:10,11) who is identified by his greatness. Whatever Moses' reluctance toward complying with the historical God, he is assured that God will accompany him in the task. Some scholars believe that the title of "Pharaoh" alone was incorporated in the Pentateuch as opposed to the insertion of the full identity of the Egyptian king as a sign of a purposeful eradication of the individual who reigned.³ In other words, instead of the text identifying who the actual Pharaoh was, typically the writer of the text will just indicate that the individual is a "Pharaoh". I personally believe that the identity of the reigning Pharaoh was never mentioned because the title itself was enough to instill an adversarial image in the mind of revolting slavery-bound Hebrew people. Whatever the case may be this feeling of hatred and disgust against Pharaoh has been so severe that centuries later Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenistic Jew who lived during the first century, labeled him as an "oppressor who presides over the rights of free men".⁴

My overall analysis of the book of Exodus can be described as a massive departure of the Hebrew people from one location to another. My impression of this

² T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), s.v. "Pharaoh" by B.A. Strawn.

³ Ibid., 634.

⁴ Philo, of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. Charles D. Yonge (Peabody: Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 462.

departure is not only geographical, but is also that of a spiritual one. Moses departs from a shepherd to a leader (Exo.3:1; 3:10), the Hebrew people, who have no hope, depart from an oppressive community (Exo.3:9-10; 3:21) to that of a chosen nation, and Pharaoh departs from his reign as supreme (Exo.3:11; 14:30-31) to that of an utterly defeated foe. It seems that the author of this book intended for the contents to be of great use for the foundation of the Hebrew people's history as a God-centered and civilized community. I agree with Dr. Alan Cole that "exodus" being translated from the Septuagint meaning "going out" better defines the book than the original Hebrew meaning "these-are-the-names".⁵ Clearly we see the Hebrew people formerly represented by individual patriarchs in Genesis, going out of one era (as described in the book of Exodus) and walking as a nation into another (Priestly/Levitical period).

Literary Context

- I. Israel in Egypt (1:1-13:16)
 - A. The Children of Israel, The Persecution and the Deliverer (1:1-2:25)
 - B. The Call of the Mediator, His Commission, and His obedience (3:1-7:7)
 - C. Yahweh's Mighty Acts and the Exodus: Proof of Yahweh's Presence (7:8-13:16)
- II. Israel in the Wilderness (13:17-18:27)
 - A. Israel's Deliverance (13:17- 14:31)
 - B. Israel's Thanksgiving (15:1-27)
 - C. Israel's Ungratefulness (16:1-12)

⁵ Alan R. Cole, *Exodus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 11.

- D. Israel's Revelation of Blessing, Victory, and Order (16:13-18:27)
- III. Israel at Sinai (19:1-40:38)
 - A. The Advent of Yahweh's Presence and the Making of the Covenant (19:1-4:38)
 - B. Yahweh's Instructions for the Media of Worship (25:1-31:18)
 - C. Israel's First Disobedience and Its Consequences (32:1-34:35)
 - D. Israel's Obedience of God's Instructions (35:1-40:38)

The revelation of the sovereign historical Yahweh given in the pericope begins after (vv. 1-12) the description of the call of Moses to become a mediator and (vv. 4:1-17) some time before the commission of Moses to return to Egypt. The outline above, which has been derived from the Word Biblical Commentary, originally describes (vv. 3:1-7:7) Moses as a deliverer.⁶ However, modifications have been made to portray Moses in his more perfect role as mediator between Yahweh and human beings.⁷ These modifications include Moses' later discourse with God concerning the destruction of the Hebrews concerning their idolatry. Moses then requests that he too be blotted out instead of his countrymen. Moses is also charged to venture into dangerous is also charged to venture into dangerous territory where he will suffer great risk.⁸ The passage summarizes the heart of the message that the book as a whole contains and acts as an introduction to the whole text.

⁶ Durham, John I. *Exodus*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 3. (Nashville: Word Books, 1987), vii-x.

⁷ Cornelis Den Hertog, "The prophetic dimension of the divine name: On Exodus 3:14a and its Context," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (April 2002): 227.

⁸ Henry F. Knight, "The burning bush in the shadows of Auschwitz: A Post-Shoah Return to Holy Ground," *Quarterly Review* 19 (Summer 1999): 183.

The literature in this passage is strictly a form of commentary. There are no shifts whatsoever in its content, which contrasts with the genealogies given in the first chapter and the confrontation repetitions found in the fifth chapter. The passage seems to be part of a larger symmetry of commentary that is quite unusual if the prophet Moses is claiming to have written it from the view of the first person. By the writer combining these passages of scripture we are able to view a direct relation between the call (vv.1-12), the revelation (vv. 13-22), and the commission (vv. 4:1-17) of Yahweh to humankind.

The writer of the Pentateuch mentions that the Yahweh of the burning bush is the one and the same God of the fathers.⁹ There is little doubt that the narrator's full intention of Exodus is to give Israel a historical account of their escape route from Egypt (their call) to the wilderness (where Israel received revelation) and from the wilderness to Sinai (where they were commissioned v. 35:1). The discourse with Moses (vv. 13-22) concerning the Promised Land is directly in God's view while they are still in bondage.¹⁰ These strategical writings will not only remind future Israel of its heritage, but it will motivate present Israel to capture the land that is still deemed unconquered. This transpiring strategy also finds its way into the New Testament. It can be summed up as premature instruction. This type of instruction is not to be put in action during the present, but is given to inspire hope for the future. Perhaps this very passage of scripture itself was in the mind of the Messiah when commissioning his disciples about the land they were to be witnesses in (Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8) while they were yet in Galilee.

⁹ Anthony Phillips and Lucy Phillips, "The Origin of 'I am' in Exodus 3.14," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 78 (June 1998): 81.

¹⁰ David Noel Freeman, ed, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. "Moses" by Dewey M. Beegle.

Historical Context

The literature found in the book of Exodus is not outside of scholarly debate. Tradition tells us that the prophet Moses has written Exodus. However, the author of this second book has been questioned as well. It would be quite logical to conclude that Moses wrote the book of Exodus because of such scriptures as Exodus 24:4 and 34:27 where he is commanded by Yahweh to inscribe the words that Yahweh was giving him.¹¹ But in later years the question of Exodus' authorship has come under major scrutiny.

Alexander and Baker indicate:

The traditional understanding of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch, though still affirmed by some, has usually been set aside in favor of a more complex understanding of its origins.¹²

Truly the authorship and authenticity of the book of Exodus is more mysterious as time unfolds. Even the dating of the exodus is not outside of debate. According to Bush, Hubbard, and LaSor:

Even though the Exodus was certainly the central event of Israel's history, no solution is yet available to explain the complex chronological and geographical problems involved. Exactly when and where the Exodus took place cannot be

¹¹ F.F. Bruce, ed, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), s.v. "Exodus, Book of".

¹² T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), s.v. "Exodus, Book of" by T.E. Fretheim.

stated with certitude. However, the general period that best fits most of the biblical and extra biblical evidence is the first half of the thirteenth century.¹³

However, there are other scholars who believe the more conservative approach and have taken the account given by the writer of I Kings 6:1 in a more literal fashion.¹⁴ This approach is based on the fact that the founding of the temple was around 970 BCE and the writer indicates that Israel departed from Egypt four hundred and eighty years later. This would seem to conclude that the exodus occurred sometime around 1450 BCE. One of the differences that this writer has noticed between both beliefs is that one belief system seems to incorporate the dating of various pieces of extra biblical literature and the other only adopts the canonical writings. The only line of questioning that I have concerning those who have a more conservative approach is where they are receiving the information for the building of Solomon's temple. If they were relying on extra biblical material their argument would fail to hold water.

The book seems to arise out of a time of a longing for political identity. The Egyptians are oppressing the Israelites, which create a hunger for liberation. Liberation to a browbeaten people such as early Israel means that their demands and expectancy of a political leader is extremely high. Such a leader will bring hope to a dying nation and the birth of a new society. However, when reading the book of Exodus, Moses' initial response to the calling of leadership weakens the way Israel would have perceived their political guide. Moses does not seem to Israel to be a rebel or a conqueror. Instead Moses is a Midianite shepherd whose insecurities will ultimately affect his interaction

¹³ Frederick W. Bush, David A. Hubbard, and William S. Lasor, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 59.

¹⁴ Alan R. Cole, *Exodus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 41-42.

with God. Moses seems less a political leader and more as a spiritual magician.¹⁵ His calling eventually resulted in a political response to the needs of the people, but this is not how he appears to Israel at all. Here they are waiting for their political leader, which will dominate the oppressive forces with an iron fist. Instead they receive a shepherd who performs magical acts in the name of Yahweh, who was also the God of the ancestors.

Modern Egypt is vastly different from the ancient Egypt, which appears in the Exodus account.¹⁶ Biblical writings also seem to indicate that Egypt is a wealthy land that draws foreign people. There were also some Israelites according to Numbers 14:4 who missed the land of Egypt while wandering in the wilderness. These individuals must have lacked something that they missed in Egypt that they went without in other lands. According to the Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch, “The ancient Egypt that we met from time to time in the pages of the Bible is that of rich and complex civilization whose history runs from approximately 3000 BCE to Roman times”.¹⁷ However there is some doubt in my mind that Egypt was as rich as tradition portrays. In Exodus 3:17 a contrast is made with the land of Egypt and the land that is promised to Israel for an inheritance. The LORD refers to the land of promise as “the land that floweth with milk and honey”. If Egypt’s land were richer why would there be a contrast? There is also another contrast of Israel’s promised land being good and spacious (v 3:8). This would support the decision made of Israel to leave the dry and barren land in hopes of receiving something better.

¹⁵ R. Albertz. *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period: From the beginnings to the end of the monarchy*. (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1992), 46.

¹⁶ T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), s.v. “Egypt, Egyptians” by K.A. Kitchen.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Egypt was the major world power during the time of Israel's captivity. Perhaps the Israelites were not the only people that felt the sting of Pharaoh's whip. There is biblical evidence that other people sojourned with Israel from the land of their captivity (v 12:38). It would be the descendants of these strangers that would ultimately cause rifts among Israel's theology and religion. Perhaps during the time of these writings Israel was in jeopardy of losing her identity among the many heathen nations even within her own ranks. In these times Israel would have to be reminded of their history and heritage. Israel's heritage would no longer be the subject of oral communication and counted as mere fictitious stories, but now would be written down as a memorial before all to see.

Formal Analysis

Outline

- I. Theophany and Commission (vv. 13-16).
 - A. Questioning of God's Name (v. 13).
 - B. Declaration of Divine Authority (vv. 14-15).
 - C. Instruction Concerning Israel and the Elders (v. 16).
- II. The Promises of Yahweh (vv. 17-22).
 - A. Assurance of Freedom (vv. 17-20).
 - B. Assurance of Favor (vv. 21-22).

This pericope has a writing style that reflects a historical narrative and a short story. The author begins the short story passage in the midst of a dialogue between God and Moses (vv.13-15). The ongoing discourse then moves to the call and commission of

Moses to visit the elders of the land and then finally Pharaoh (v. 16).¹⁸ This passage also bears the conventional patterns of movement also seen in other scriptures concerning God's self-revelation.¹⁹ However, the conventional pattern is somewhat choppy and interwoven with another pattern, such as the inquiring of God's name as seen with Jacob (Gen. 32). Although the pattern that the author uses is similar to that of Jacob's discourse, overall I deem it conventional because of the closeness with the other passages. In them God will normally initialize some sort of manifestation, reveal his name, and will make a promise as seen here.²⁰ The passage concludes with the acknowledging of Israel as Yahweh's chosen people, which contrasts to their situation of bondage in the beginning. The latter half of the pericope contains a chiasmic structure that plays out in a historical narrative and is a summary of the events that are to take place later within the writings of the Pentateuch (vv.17-22).

Chiasmic Structure

- a) I will bring you up out of misery (v. 17)
- b) You and the elders of Israel shall go to the king (v. 18)
- c) Acknowledgment of the king of Egypt's hardness of heart (v.19)
- a) I will stretch out my hand (v. 20-21a)
- b) You will not go empty handed when you go (v. 21b)
- c) Acknowledgment of Israel's favor (v. 22)

¹⁸ Durham, John I. *Exodus*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 3. (Nashville: Word Books, 1987), 41.

¹⁹ Gen. 17.1; 26.25; 28.13; Ex 3.6 NRSV

²⁰ B.S. Childs. *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*. (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1974), 65.

Detailed Analysis

Questioning of God's Name (v. 13)

The passage begins with Moses questioning the name of God. The text seems to indicate that the name of God is important to Moses because it will be primarily important to the Israelites. Moses insinuates that the mere mentioning of the God of your אֲבוֹת meaning ancestors or first fathers will not be sufficient when confronting the people.²¹ The language of being God of the ancestors was first mentioned in verse 6 by God and is now being held under the scrutiny of Moses. Perhaps Moses had the deities of Egypt in mind when questioning God.²² The Hebrew people may have been searching for a defining identity among other nations during the time of these writings. The other nations including Egypt did serve false gods and any mention of the true God of Israel could prevent future failure. It would have been beneficial for the writer to mention the first fathers in order to establish these ancient patriarchs as heroes who were given promises that were later to be received by the people who read about them. It could also be possible that the elders of the people were awaiting another name from God. With this understanding Dr. Alan Cole suggests:

To ask the question, 'Under what new title has God appeared to you?' is equivalent to asking, 'What new revelation have you received from God?' Normally, in patriarchal days, any new revelation of the ancestral God will be summed up in a new title for Him (Gn. 16:13), which will in future both record and recount a deeper knowledge of God's saving activity. We may therefore assume that, in asking this question, they were expecting a new title for the patriarchal God.²³

²¹ F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, eds. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1906), s.v. "אֲבוֹת."

²² Durham, John I. *Exodus*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 3. (Nashville, TN: Word Books, 1987), 38.

²³ R.A. Cole. *Exodus*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press 1973), 69.

Declaration of Divine Authority (vv. 14-15)

God then responds back to Moses by saying, “I am who I am”. This is probably one of the more profound statements of God in scripture. The LORD manifests himself as the self-existent one. In this declaration of divine authority, Moses from this point on is going to be seen in a different light. To pharaoh he will seem as a god. This is probably in correlation to the pharaoh who was the man god at this particular time. God in his wisdom allows Moses to represent his deity against the wickedness of Pharaoh. By God meets the challenge head on against the powers of Egypt. Since Pharaoh sets himself up as a god, Yahweh will set Moses up to plunder Pharaoh so that his glory may be seen. This type of strategy is also seen in the instance of the magicians challenging Moses (Ex 7.9-12 NRSV). Again, Yahweh permits mere human beings to challenge his power for the sake of allowing his glory to be seen. This strategy manifests God’s power against wickedness head-on. Yahweh then reveals his name to Moses, but he also commissions Moses to use the name as an object of authority in relation to Israel. Notice that a funneling process is present. God reveals himself to Moses. God then reveals himself to Israel. Finally, God will reveal himself to Egypt.

Instruction Concerning Israel and the Elders (v. 16)

God then gives Moses the instructions concerning the elders of Israel. These instructions are important if Moses is to have followers. This signifies to the reader that the elders must have had a special relationship to the people of Israel. A certain persuasion must have been in their reach among the Hebrew people. If Moses is to persuade the leaders, the leaders will in turn persuade the people. The instruction for Moses is to assemble. The word **אָסַף** also means to take away or remove.²⁴ In this sense it seems quite logical in the way Pharaoh viewed the Hebrew people. This understanding views them as workers that will be taken away. To a king this could also seem as a rebellion or insurrection of vassals against the lord of the territory. Moses is then directed to inform the elders that their oppression has been seen and acknowledged by the God of the ancestors. Again this language is used as a reminder to the people of Israel of their identity. Perhaps the Hebrew people began believing that the Egyptians were actually superior to them. Having been oppressed and enslaved by people who regard themselves as greater would have an overpowering effect on any people. The reminder to the elders of Israel of a God who promised the ancients of an inheritance that would one day be received by their children is certainly a factor that should not go unnoticed. This element would encourage the Hebrews to hope, as did their forefathers.

Assurance of Freedom (vv. 17-20)

²⁴ J. Strong. “אָסַף” In *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1890), 15.

God informs Moses of the land that was promised to the seed of Abraham. This land would actually be given to those surviving in future generations. The land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites were probably territories that were being occupied while the text was being written. The land flowing with milk and honey is a type of poetic imagery used to portray a perfect and blessed land that is already prepared for the taking. I believe the writer chose to use this type of language because of an individual passion that existed concerning this particular land.

Alexander and Baker indicate:

The patriarchal narratives recount the acquisition of possessions by God's people, both in the Promised Land and in Egypt (Gen 14:22-24; 20:14-16; 24:35; 26:12-13; 30:43; 47:27; Ex 11:2-3; 12:35-36). Yahweh later pledged to provide homes, good crops, fruitful trees and vineyards in Canaan after the dispossession of its inhabitants (Deut 6:10-11; 8:7-10).

At one level these material gifts echoed the divine purpose at creation to bless humanity and were a particular expression of the mandate to multiply and fill the earth (note Gen 24:35; 26:12-14; 47:27). Prosperity ideally would lead to a spirit of generosity toward others and to a greater trust in divine providence: Abram allowed Lot to choose his residence and was rewarded with the hope of a greater possession (Gen 13:8-17); *Jacob shared with *Esau from what he had gained in his sojourn in Paddan-aram (Gen 33:10-11); and Joseph sent his brothers home with abundant provisions (Gen 45:19-24; 50:20).²⁵

Moses is then informed that the elders will listen to him, but Pharaoh will not unless prompted by Yahweh himself (vv. 18-19). This assurance is contrasted with the pomp and reign of Pharaoh who is setting himself to be as a god to the people. Even though God has promised the land to the Hebrew people, the initial request of the Hebrew is to have a three days journey so sacrifice can be made to Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews. This schematic approach places Yahweh at the forefront. Any objections to the sacrifice that will be received by God will ultimately be against God. Any thoughts

²⁵ Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), s.v. "Wealth and Poverty" by R. Carroll.

of the Hebrew people acting outside of the plans of Yahweh are pushed aside with this one request. The current modern translations of this particular text are lacking because they all mention the word, “LORD” in place of Yahweh. It would sound redundant to mention that “LORD” is not a name but “Yahweh” is the name that God has chosen to reveal himself as. Since the current modern translations render the word “LORD” in its place, something is lost. Pharaoh will now be confronted with Yahweh, the king of the Hebrews. Perhaps this provides some reason for the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart.

A foreshadow of the future wilderness experience is mentioned which indicates that this escape route was already in the mind of God. The word מִדְבָּר, which means wilderness, is also used to denote tracts of land used for the pasturage of flocks and herds.²⁶ In this respect Yahweh acts as the great shepherd who drives his people out as a shepherd does a flock of sheep. God then informs Moses that the outstretched hand of Yahweh will assuredly punish Egypt. Moses is reminded of the explicit power that comes from God alone. This power is not to be confused with any other. After the treachery that will be seen in Egypt. A promise is made of Yahweh to Moses that Pharaoh will let them go.

Assurance of Favor (vv. 21-22)

²⁶ F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, eds. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* :Peabody)
“מִדְבָּר .v.s.(1906Hendrickson Publishers, :.Mass”

Yahweh gives the assurance of favor to Moses concerning the Hebrew people. Perhaps this is in direct correlation to the mumbling that would come later on during the journey of Moses and the Hebrew people in the wilderness. It is as if God is preparing Moses for what he must endure before making a long journey. God is equipping Moses with assurance and confidence to complete the task set before him. The Hebrew people are then promised that when the journey is to take place they will not go empty-handed. God will give them favor among the people that once oppressed them. This treachery that is to enter Egypt will become so plain that the Egyptians will try to alleviate it by offering the Hebrews gifts. The gifts that the Hebrew women will receive will then be given to their sons and daughters. A transfer process will take place between the two nations. The glory of Egypt will be handed to the Hebrew people. The Egyptians will then be plundered and snatched away.

The task of taking an exodus from Egypt not only casts a shadow on the rest of the book, but it is also a significant theme throughout the rest of the Hebrew and Christian canon.²⁷ This obviously is a historical theme, which is to be told and passed on to future generations because it is with them who are to inhabit the land that is possessed. Upon the reception of such writings the people of Israel would be able to appreciate the land that had been given to them. It would also provide them with a national history, which would act to preserve them as a nation as opposed to mixing with other nations.

²⁷ B. Green, "Great Trek and Long Walk: Readings of a Biblical Symbol," *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (July 1999): 273.

Synthesis and Application

The passage as a whole seems to imply that Yahweh is the merciful deliverer who loves his people so much that he is willing to avenge them of their adversaries. In a culture that currently views mercy as a form of cheap grace it is interesting to see God's character in another light.²⁸ In this case the Lord is not tolerant of the injustices that his people are facing. Yahweh chooses to have a special compassion on his people while holding Pharaoh and his kingdom accountable for their cruelties. Glimpses of Yahweh's compassion can initially be seen during the conversation with Moses, the poor shepherd who questions his purpose in the Lord's plan. A profound message is seen in this passage. Here we see God as a relational and avenging agent in a culture of injustices. God becomes intolerant of the cruelties against his people and yet becomes more relational to a nation. In this passage we see that relationship calls for a certain level of accountability for the parties that are involved. We see that Moses and the Hebrew people are now held to a higher standard, but only after their interaction with God. Relationship by no means is inferior to law. The church as a whole could benefit from applying this passage by appreciating the grace and judgment that exist together in the character of God through interaction in his presence. Often it is easy to allow our own presuppositions to paint a picture of God for us. However, this passage shatters all possibilities of God being viewed exclusively in one light.

As an Apostolic believer I can honestly say that God's judgment is often stressed more as opposed to God's grace in my particular community of faith. This approach is often stressed to influence the response of repentance and faith toward God. While

²⁸ L.G. Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 146.

looking at the text, the apostolic church as a faith would probably focus on the significance of judgment that befell Egypt rather than Yahweh's interaction as a merciful suzerainty in relation to the Hebrew people as a vassal counterpart. I admit that it was difficult for me to view God and his people in this mode. Yet, once I began to apply the methods of hermeneutics to the passage I slightly began understanding the importance of its usage. The method of detailed analysis will probably be the most acceptable among the community in which I am involved. Word studies are somewhat neutral until we apply our understanding of what the definition means. The more of the hermeneutic I engaged, the more I began to be satisfied of its results. Once this writer made contact with a particular term, I was face to face with possible definitions of that word and how it could mean something else in that specific time. As a minister this passage has encouraged me to invest in more scholarly lexicons and dictionaries. This will allow me to be more accurate concerning the original context and meaning of certain biblical settings.

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